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(54) **SENDING NOTIFICATIONS TO MEMBERS OF SOCIAL GROUP IN A SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM**

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See application file for complete search history.

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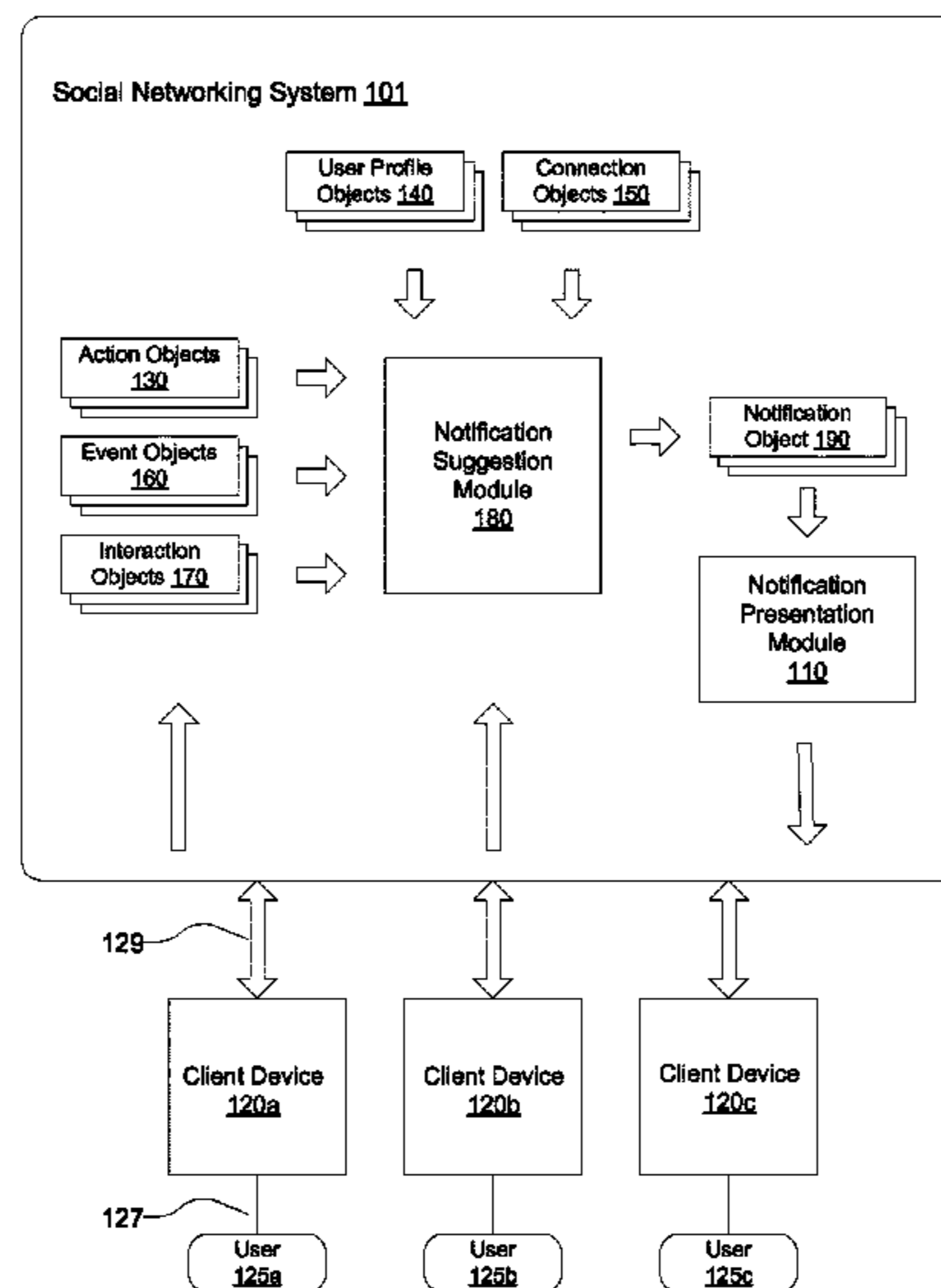
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A social networking system notifies its users of different events and actions taking place inside the social networking system. To present notifications that are most likely to be of interest to the user, the social networking system observes the interactions of the user with notifications presented to the user and suggests an option to opt-out of notifications associated with a source based on the observed interactions. The option to opt-out of notifications associated with the source may be presented if the users interactions with the notifications presented are below a threshold. Notifications associated with a social group are presented to the user based on factors describing the group and the relation between the user and other users of the social group, for example, seniority of the user, size of the group, and the rate at which user actions associated with the group are received.

**20 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets**



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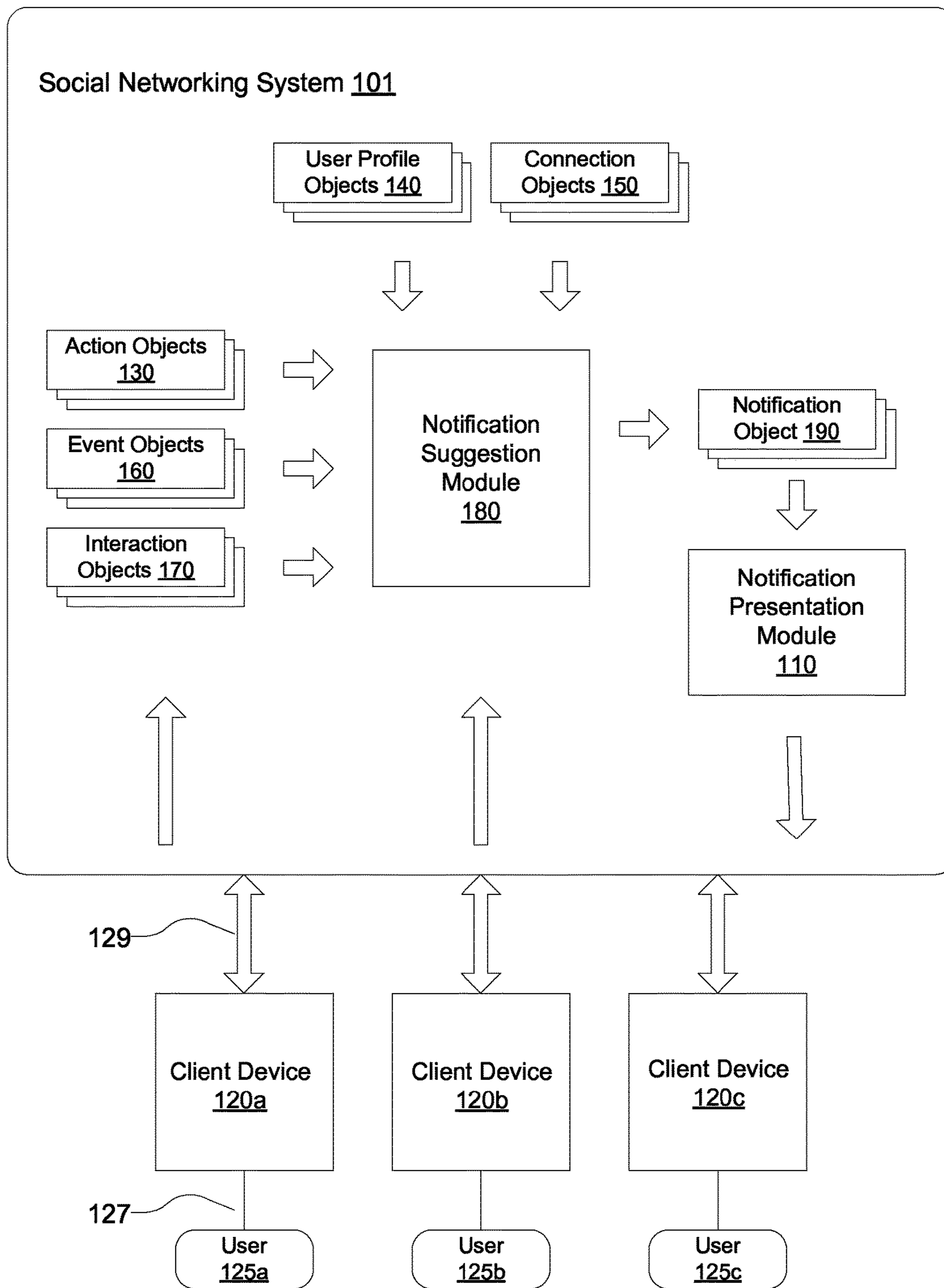


FIG. 1

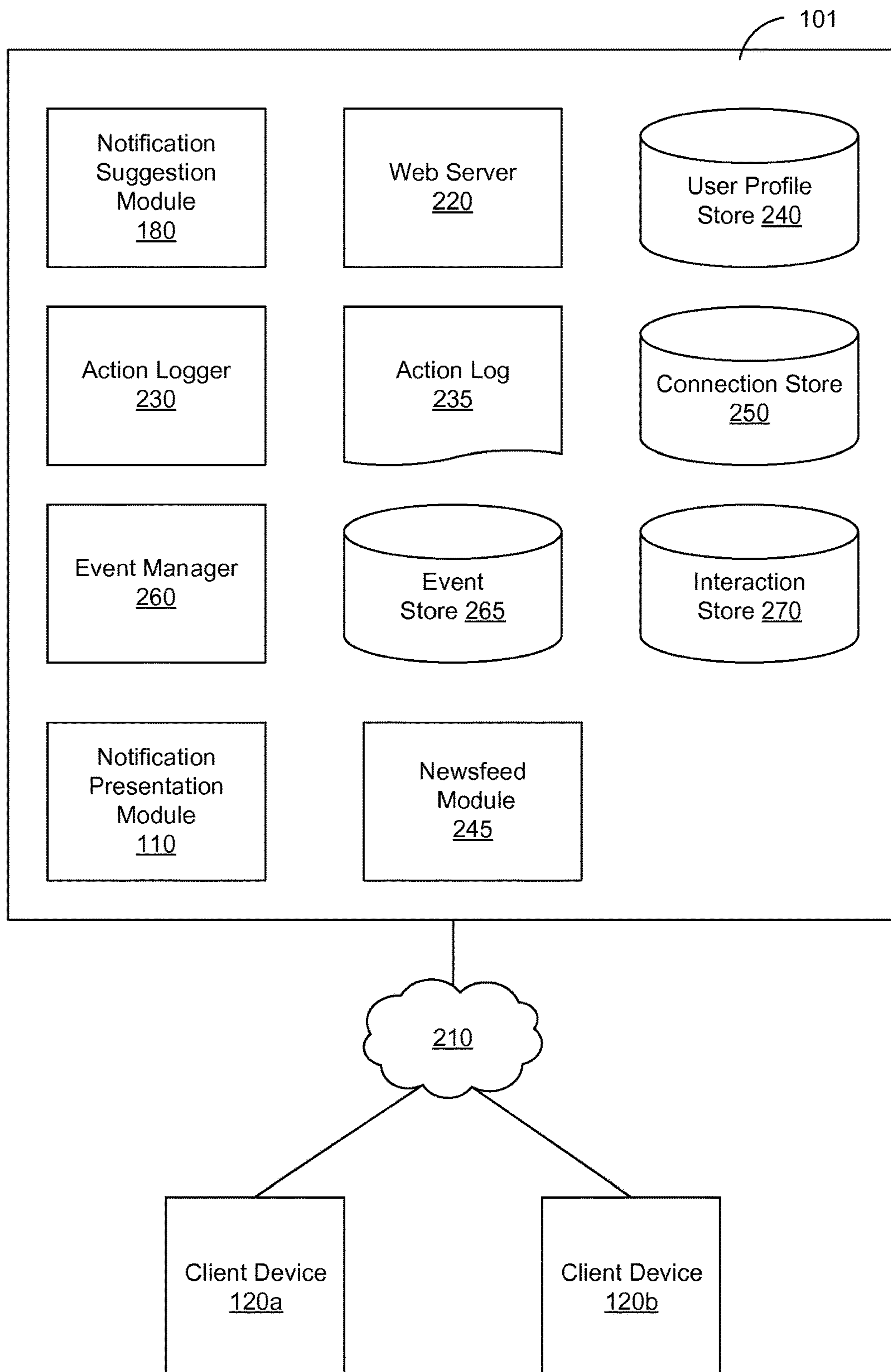
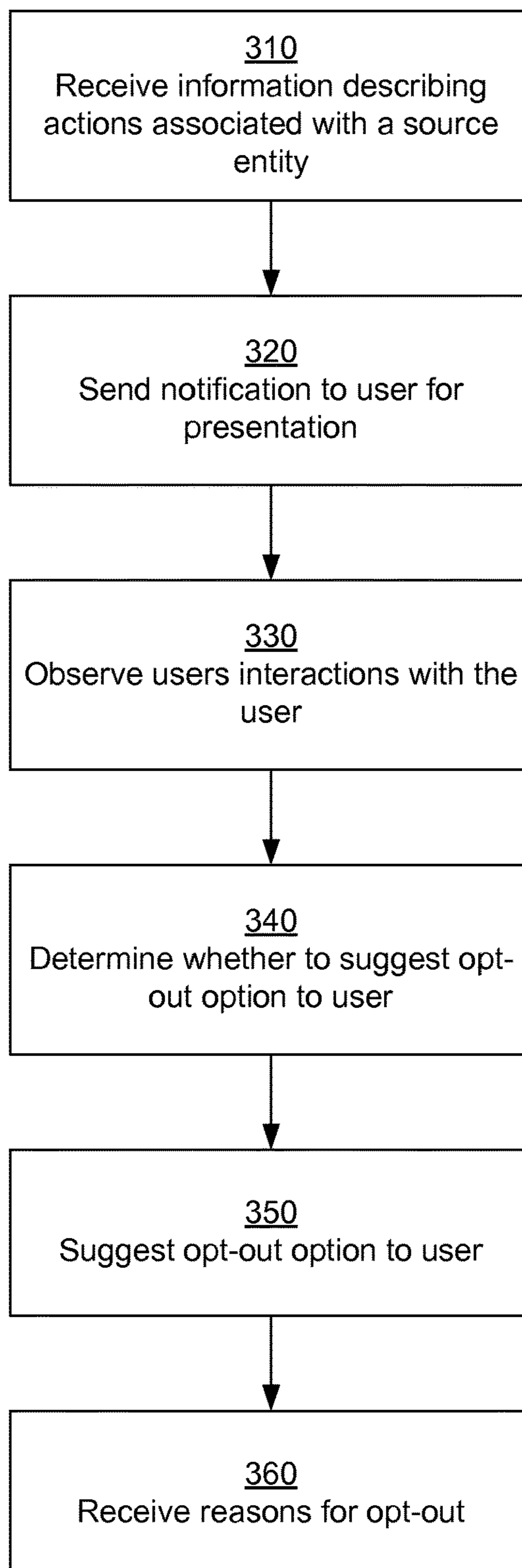


FIG. 2

**FIG. 3**

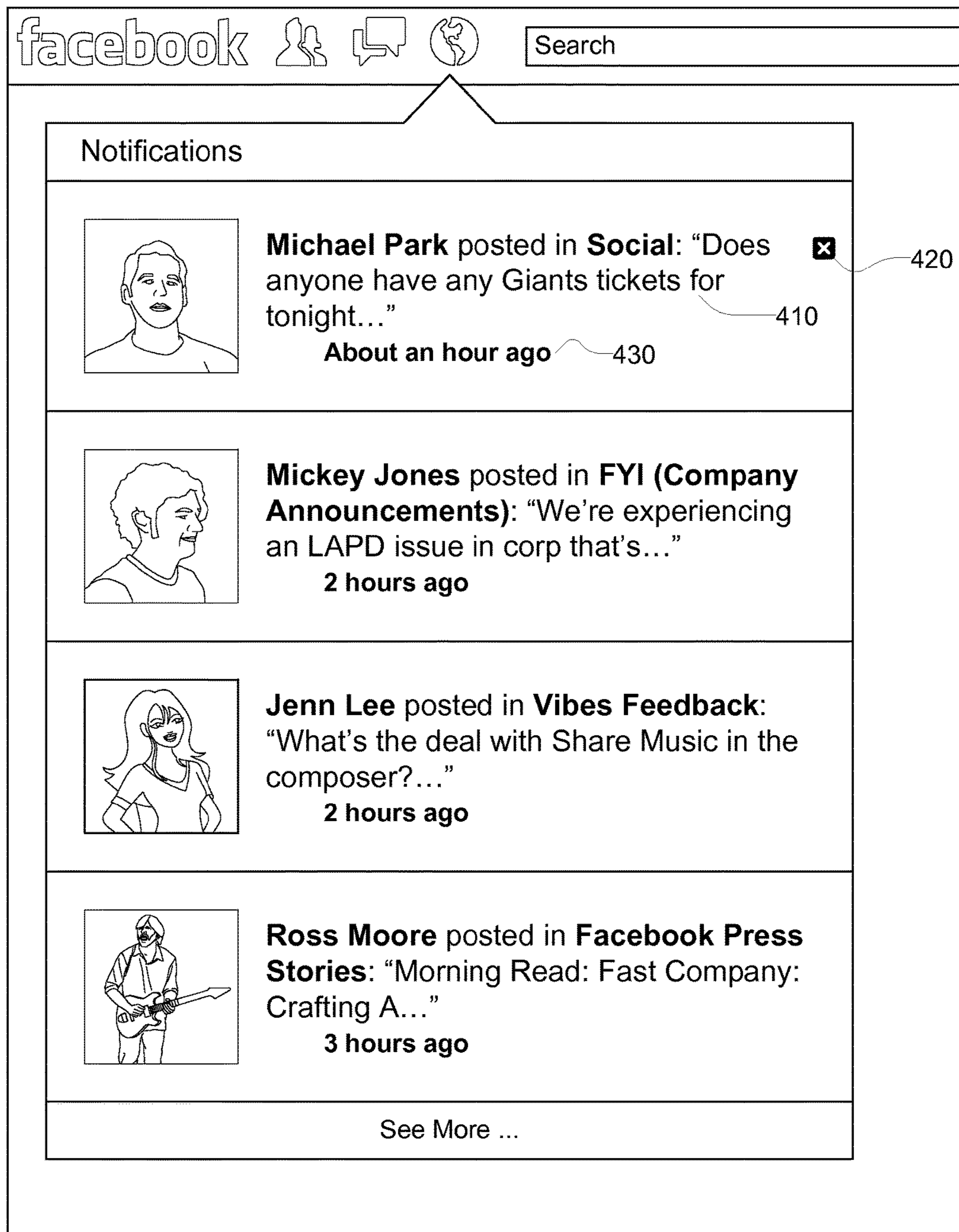


FIG. 4

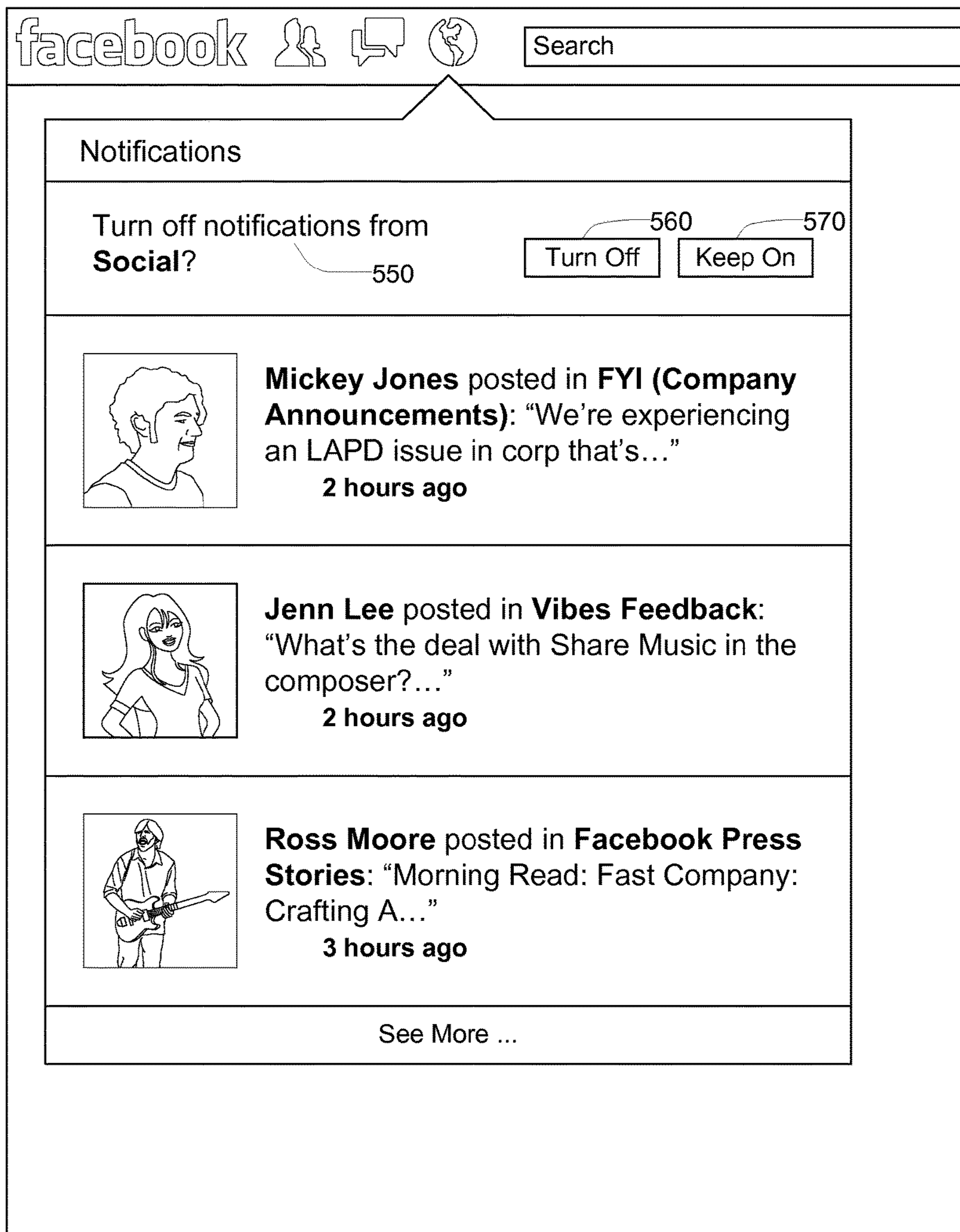


FIG. 5

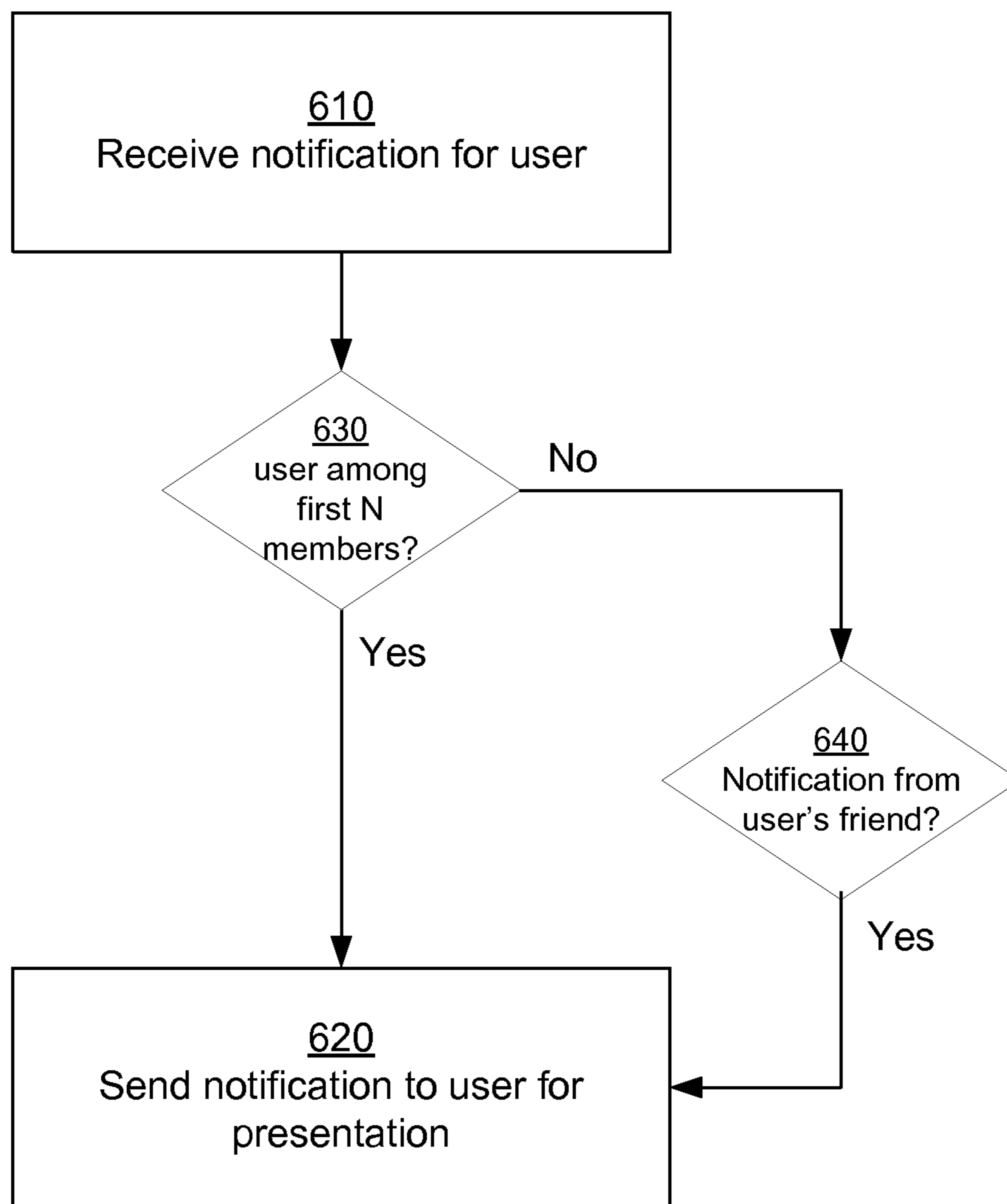


FIG. 6



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## SENDING NOTIFICATIONS TO MEMBERS OF SOCIAL GROUP IN A SOCIAL NETWORKING SYSTEM

### BACKGROUND

This invention relates to sending notifications to a user of a social networking system, and in particular to suggesting opt-out of notifications to users of the social networking system.

Social networking system store social information provided by users including but not limited to hometown, current city, education history, employment history, photos, and events the user participated in the user's profile. Users utilize social networking systems because social networking systems allow users to create connections with friends and interact with each other. Social networking systems allow users to view other user's profile, organize events, and invite friends to participate in those events.

Users spend time in a social networking system viewing other users' profiles, pictures and posts. Oftentimes users find value in using a social networking system because they can obtain information and updates about their friends it would have been otherwise hard to obtain. For example, a user may have a friend that moved abroad. Using the social networking system, the user can find out what his friend has been doing and see his friend's photos the minute they are uploaded onto the social networking system.

A social networking system may store large amount of information that may be of interest to a user. This includes information describing other users that are connected to the user and user actions taken by different users. The social networking system may provide information describing these actions as notifications to the user. A user may be interested in some of these user actions but may not be interested in all the user actions available in the social networking system. To provide a good experience to users, the social networking system preferably sends notifications that are likely to be of interest to its users and does not send notifications that its users would find bothersome.

### SUMMARY

Embodiments of the invention send notifications to members of a social group in a social networking system. The social group may be formed by users of the social networking system having some common interest, for example, some sports activity, or by a graduating class from a college. The social networking system sends notifications based on posts by one member to other members of the social group. The social networking system determines whether to send notifications about posts from a user to a subject user based on various factors including the size of the group, the seniority of the subject user in the group, an affinity of the subject user for the group, and affinity of the subject user for one or more members of the group, a frequency of the subject user's interaction with the group, and a frequency of posts directed to the group.

For example, if the subject user is one of the members of the group that joined the group early (i.e., a senior member of the group), the subject user may receive all posts from other members. On the other hand, if the user is not one of the senior members of the group, a notification to the user may be sent if the notification is about a post from a connection of the user. If the group size is small (e.g., below a threshold value), all posts from every member may be sent as notifications to other members. Additionally, a user may

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receive more posts as notifications if the user has higher affinity with the group, for example, if the user interacts with the social group very frequently. A user may receive all notifications about posts by certain members if the user has high affinity with these members.

The features and advantages described in this summary and the following detailed description are not all-inclusive. Many additional features and advantages will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art in view of the drawings, specification, and claims.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a diagram of a system environment for sending notifications to a user of a social networking system, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a diagram of the system architecture of a social networking system for sending notifications to a user of a social networking system, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 3 is a flowchart of a process for sending notifications to a user of a social networking system, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 4 shows a user interface for presenting notifications to a user of the social networking system, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5 shows a user interface that allows a user to opt out of certain types of notifications, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 6 shows the process of selecting notifications to be sent to a user that is a member of a group, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

The figures depict various embodiments of the present invention for purposes of illustration only. One skilled in the art will readily recognize from the following discussion that alternative embodiments of the structures and methods illustrated herein may be employed without departing from the principles of the invention described herein.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

#### System Environment for Providing Notifications

A social networking system may send notifications to users, thereby providing information that is likely to be of interest to users. Notifications may provide information describing various actions taken by connections of a user. For example, a connection of a user may install an application using the social networking system, join a social group, create a connection with another user, like a photo, comment on a product, write on another user's wall, check-in to the social networking system from a particular location, update the user's status, and so on.

FIG. 1 is a diagram of a system environment for selecting which notifications to send to a user of a social networking system, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The social networking system maintains several objects **140**, **150** representing entities in the social networking system. The social networking system also maintains objects **130**, **170** representing actions performed by users via the social networking systems. Several of these objects provide information that may be of interest to users. The notification suggestion module **180** analyzes information available in these objects to determine information that may be presented as notification to the users. The notification presentation module **110** sends the notifications for presentation to the user via the client device **120**. The notification presentation module **110** may receive feedback from a user that can be

used by the notification suggestion module **180** for selecting the notifications presented to each user.

FIG. **1** and the other figures use like reference numerals to identify like elements. A letter after a reference numeral, such as “**130A**,” indicates that the text refers specifically to the element having that particular reference numeral. A reference numeral in the text without a following letter, such as “**130**,” refers to any or all of the elements in the figures bearing that reference numeral (e.g., “**130**” in the text refers to reference numerals “**130A**” and/or “**130B**” in the figures).

The users **125** interact with the social networking system **101** using client devices **120**. Some embodiments of the system **101** have different and/or other modules than the ones described herein, and the functions may be distributed among the modules in a different manner than described here.

In one embodiment, the client device **120** used by a user **125** for interacting with the social networking system **101** may be a personal computer (PC), a desktop computer, a laptop computer, a notebook, a tablet PC executing an operating system, for example, a Microsoft Windows-compatible operating system (OS), Apple OS X, and/or a Linux distribution. In another embodiment, the client device **120** may be any device having computer functionality, such as a personal digital assistant (PDA), mobile telephone, smart phone, etc.

In some embodiments, the client device **120** may use a web browser as an interface to interact with the social networking system. In other embodiments, specialized application software such as native applications on a mobile device may be used as an interface to interact with the social networking system.

The social networking system **101** offers its users the ability to communicate and interact with other users of the social networking system **101**. Users join the social networking system **101** and then add connections to a number of other users of the social networking system **101** to whom they desire to be connected. As used herein, the term “friend” refers to any other user to whom a user has formed a connection, association, or relationship via the social networking system **101**. The term friend need not require that users to actually be friends in real life, (which would generally be the case when one of the members is a business or other entity); it simply implies a connection in the social networking system **101**.

The social networking system **101** maintains different types of objects representing entities, for example, user profile objects **140**, connection objects **150**, action object **130**, event objects **160**, interaction objects **170**, and notification objects **190**. An object may be stored for each instance of the associated entity. A user profile object **140** stores information describing a user of the social networking system **101**. A connection object **150** stores information describing relations between two users of the social networking system or in general any two entities represented in the social networking system **101**. An action object **130** stores information describing user action on and/or off the social networking system **101**. An event object **160** stores representations of real-world events in the social networking system **101**. An interaction object **170** stores information related to incoming and outgoing interaction between two accounts in the social networking system **101**. A notification object **190** stores information about an activity that happened in the social networking system that may be of interest to the user **125**. These objects are further described in detail herein.

The social networking system **101** comprises modules other than those shown in FIG. **1**, for example, modules illustrated in FIG. **2** that are further described herein.

Social Networking System Architecture

FIG. **2** is a diagram of system architecture of a social networking system **101** that selects which notifications to send to a user of a social networking system, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The social networking system **101** includes a web server **220**, an action logger **230**, an action log **235**, an event manager **260**, an event store **265**, a user profile store **240**, a connection store **250**, an interaction store **270**, a newsfeed module **245**, a notification presentation module **110**, and a notification suggestion module **180**. In other embodiments, the social networking system **101** may include additional, fewer, or different modules for various applications. Conventional components such as network interfaces, security mechanisms, load balancers, failover servers, management and network operations consoles, and the like are not shown so as to not obscure the details of the system.

The social networking system **101** allows users to communicate or otherwise interact with each other and access content, as described herein. The social networking system **101** stores user profile objects **140** in the user profile store **240**. The information stored in user profile store **240** describes the users of the social networking system **101**, including biographic, demographic, and other types of descriptive information, such as work experience, educational history, gender, sexual preferences, hobbies or preferences, location, and the like. The user profile store **240** may also store information provided by the user, for example, images, videos, comments, and status updates. Images of users may be tagged with the identification information of the appropriate users displayed in an image.

Any action that a particular user takes using the social networking system **101** is associated with the user’s profile **140**, through information maintained in a database or other data repository. Such actions may include, for example, adding a connection to another user, sending a message to another user, reading a message from another user, viewing content associated with another user, attending an event posted by another user, among others. In addition, a number of actions described below in connection with other objects are directed at particular users, so these actions are associated with those users as well.

The connection store **250** stores data describing the connections between different users of the social networking system **101**, for example as represented in a connection object **150**. The connections are defined by users, allowing users to specify their relationships with other users. For example, the connections allow users to generate relationships with other users that parallel the users’ real-life relationships, such as friends, co-workers, partners, and so forth. In some embodiments, the connection specifies a connection type based on the type of relationship, for example, family, or friend, or colleague. Users may select from predefined types of connections, or define their own connection types as needed.

Connections may be added explicitly by a user, for example, the user selecting a particular other user to be a friend, or automatically created by the social networking site based on common characteristics of the users (e.g., users who are alumni of the same educational institution). For example, if Bob and Joe are both connected to each other in the social networking system **101**, Bob and Joe, both users, are also each other’s friends. The connection between users may be a direct connection; however, some embodiments of

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a social networking system **200** allow the connection to be indirect via one or more levels of connections.

Friends may also be suggested by other users of the social networking system, or by the social networking system itself. The social networking system may identify other users the user may know based on the social information available to the social networking system. For example, if another user has many friends in common with the user, it is highly likely they are members of the same friendship circle and therefore the social networking system may suggest this connection to both users.

The event store **265** stores information describing events associated with the social networking system **101**, for example as represented in an event object **160**. An event object **160** may be defined for a real-world event, such as a birthday party, a baby shower, and/or a high school reunion. A user interested in attending the event may establish a connection with the event object. A user may create the event object **160** by defining information about the event such as the time and place, a list of invitees, and the privacy of the event. Other users may send a reply to the invitation (an RSVP message) i.e., accept or reject the invitation, comment on the event, post their own content (e.g., pictures from the event), and perform any other actions enabled by the social networking system **101** for the event **160**. Accordingly, the creator of the event object **160** as well as the invitees for the event may perform various actions that are associated with that event object **160**. Furthermore, the event may be public, wherein any user of the social networking system is able to see details of the event and perform actions are associated with the event (e.g., comment on the event, post content, etc); friends only, wherein only the invitees and their friends can see the details of the event and perform actions are associated with the event; or invitees only, wherein only users invited to the event, either by the creator of the event or another invitee, can see the details of the event and perform actions are associated with the event.

Then interaction store **270** stores information describing interactions between two users of the social networking system **101**, for example as represented in an interaction object **170**. An interaction object **170** may be defined as a user liking another user; a user commenting on another user's profile, photo, video, or comment; a user creating a connection with another user; of a user sending a message to another user. An interaction may be further classified as an incoming interaction or an outgoing interaction as previously explained.

The web server **220** links the social networking system **101** via a network to one or more client devices **120**; the web server **220** serves web pages, as well as other web-related content, such as Flash, XML, and so forth. The web server **220** provides the functionality of receiving and routing messages between the social networking system **101** and the client devices **220**. These messages may be instant messages, queued messages (e.g., email), text and SMS (short message service) messages, or any other suitable messaging technique.

The interactions between the client devices **110** and the online system **100** are typically performed via a network **210**, for example, via the internet. The network **210** enables communications between the client device **120** and the social networking system **101**. In one embodiment, the network **210** uses standard communications technologies and/or protocols. Thus, the network **210** may include links using technologies such as Ethernet, 802.11, worldwide interoperability for microwave access (WiMAX), 3G, digital subscriber line (DSL), asynchronous transfer mode (ATM),

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InfiniBand, PCI Express Advanced Switching, etc. Similarly, the networking protocols used on the network **210** may include multiprotocol label switching (MPLS), the transmission control protocol/Internet protocol (TCP/IP), the User Datagram Protocol (UDP), the hypertext transport protocol (HTTP), the simple mail transfer protocol (SMTP), the file transfer protocol (FTP), etc. The data exchanged over the network **210** may be represented using technologies and/or formats including the hypertext markup language (HTML), the extensible markup language (XML), etc. In addition, all or some of links may be encrypted using conventional encryption technologies such as secure sockets layer (SSL), transport layer security (TLS), virtual private networks (VPNs), Internet Protocol security (IPsec), etc. In another embodiment, the entities may use custom and/or dedicated data communications technologies instead of, or in addition to, the ones described above. Depending upon the embodiment, the network **210** may also include links to other networks such as the Internet.

The action logger **230** is capable of receiving communications from the web server **220** about user actions on and/or off the social networking system **101**. The action logger **230** populates the action log **235** with information about user actions to track them. Any action that a particular user takes with respect to another user is associated with each user's profile, through information maintained in a database or other data repository, such as the action log **235**. Such actions may include, for example, adding a connection to the other user, sending a message to the other user, reading a message from the other user, viewing content associated with the other user, attending an event posted by another user, among others. When a user takes an action on the social networking system **101**, the action is recorded in an action log **235**. In one embodiment, the social networking system **101** maintains the action log **235** as a database of entries.

The newsfeed module **245** identifies and presents newsfeed stories that provide social information to a user. However newsfeeds are delivered to a user based on a pull model. For example, information describing a story is presented to a user by the social networking system and the user pulls the story using a newsfeed user interface provided to the user by the social networking system. The newsfeed story may not even be generated until the user provides input indicating the user wants to pull the story. In contrast, a notification is delivered to a user based on a push model. The notifications are generated and stored for the user and may be pushed to a server for the user to view or even pushed to a device of the user. Since the notifications are delivered using the push model, the notification suggestion module **180** uses techniques disclosed herein to ensure that the user is highly likely to be interested in the notifications pushed to the user. Or else, notifications that are not of interest to the user may be generated and pushed to the user, thereby wasting resources of the social networking system as well as providing uninteresting information to the user.

The notification suggestion module **180** receives as an input actions, events and interactions that happened in the social networking system and generates a set of notifications to inform a user of such actions, events and interactions. The notification presentation module **110** sends the information used by a client device **120** to present notifications to the users and also request feedback from the user for use by the notification suggestion module **180**. Details of the notification suggestion module **180** and the notification presentation module **110** are further described herein.

Notification Suggestion

The generation of notifications for users of a social networking system is performed by the notification suggestion module **180**. In one embodiment, the notification suggestion module **180** takes as input actions, events, and/or interactions that occurred in the social networking system and generates the corresponding notifications to interested users.

Notifications inform users of the different actions that a user's connection has performed in the social networking system. In one embodiment, notifications are only generated for a user's friends' actions that are likely to be most relevant to the user. For example notifications may be generated for a user when one of the use's connection posts a comment mentioning the user, or when the user gets tagged in a photo. Notifications may be generated for actions that are likely to be of interest to the user as determined by past user actions. A user is likely to be interested in user actions related to a web page if the user is following the web page. Similarly, a user is likely to be interested in user actions related to a group if the user is a member of the group. As a result, notifications may be generated and sent to the user when a message is posted by a page the user is following, or when a different user posts a message in a group of which the user is a member.

Notifications generated by the notification suggestion module **180** may be delivered to the user in many different forms. Notifications may be posted in a special region of the social networking system user interface. For example, a special icon may be inserted in one of the corners of the web page used to interact with the social networking system that will change its shape or color when a new notification is generated. Notifications may also be delivered to a user via email or other types of messaging systems, such as the short messaging service (SMS), the multimedia messaging service (MMS), the enhance messaging service (EMS), and the like.

Notifications can increase the amount of time a user spends in the social networking system, but they can also enhance the user's experience in the social networking system. For example, some users only access the social networking system after receiving an email notification. But on the other hand, sending a large number of notifications to a user may provide poor user experience with the social networking system. Receiving too many notifications can make a user lose interest in reading the notifications provided by the social networking system altogether. Therefore, the notification suggestion module determines an appropriate amount of notifications so as to not miss any important notifications and not inundate the user with unimportant notifications.

Some embodiments of the notification suggestion module **180** use an opt-in schema, wherein the user has to explicitly inform the social networking system that he wants to get certain notifications. In this schema, all the notifications a user gets are very likely to be of interest to the user. The main drawback of this schema is that the user may miss certain actions for not being aware of them in the first place. The user may not be able to decide whether the user is interested in certain notifications until the user has seen those notifications.

Other embodiments of the notification suggestion module uses an opt-out schema, wherein the notification suggestion module generates notifications that may be of interest to a user and lets the user decide whether the user wants to keep getting those notifications or not. In one embodiment, the notification suggestion module presents a user interface that allows the user to provide explicit feedback indicating whether wants to keep receiving those notifications in the

future. Another embodiment presents the above user interface at least a threshold number of times for a notification cluster so long as the user does not use the user interface to opt out of the notifications. After the threshold number of times, the notification suggestion module assumes the user wants to receive notifications of that particular type, for example, notifications from that user, notifications related to a thread of comments, notifications from a particular social group, and the like. Another embodiment does not explicitly ask the user if he wants to keep getting those notifications in the future, but allows other ways of opting-out, such as through an x-out button next to the notification that may be used by the user for indicating to the social networking system that the user does not want to receive related notifications. The mechanisms that allow a user to opt out of notifications of certain type have an advantage over the mechanisms that allow users to opt-in to notifications of certain type since the user has an opportunity to review the notifications before deciding whether the user wants to continue receiving the notifications. As a result, the user makes a more informed decision compared to deciding what notifications the user wants before having an opportunity to look at the notifications, for example, the opt-in mechanism.

A notification cluster refers to a group of notifications that share certain properties or characteristics. Typically, the notification cluster refers to notifications associated with a source entity represented in the social networking system. For example, the source entity may be another user, social group, page, a thread of comments, and/or the like and the notifications may be posts associated with the source entity. In an embodiment, the notification cluster may comprise notifications of a particular action type. A user notification cluster groups notification triggered by an action performed by one of the user's connection. A social group notification cluster groups notifications triggered by an action performed by any member of a group the user is a member of. A page notification cluster groups notifications triggered by an action performed by an administrator of a page the user is following or notifications describing comments by users added to the page, notifications describing actions of other users following the page, and so on. An action type notification cluster groups notifications triggered by a specific action, such the notifications triggered by the user being tagged to a photo, or notification triggered by the user being mentioned in a post.

Some embodiments do not require explicit opt-out from the user, but the notification suggestion module may infer if the user does not want to keep getting notifications from a notification cluster based on the user's behavior after getting notifications from the cluster. For example if a user does not read a notification for more than a threshold amount of time (e.g., 30 days), the notification suggestion module may determine that the user is not interested in that notification and may automatically stop generating notifications from that notification cluster. In one embodiment, the notification suggestion module informs the user about the automatic opt-out and provides a notification to allow the user to opt back in if case the user wants to continue receiving notifications from the opted-out notification cluster. In another embodiment, if user does not read a notification for more than a threshold amount of time, the suggestion module presents the user with a user interface that allows the user to opt out of similar notifications. In one embodiment, the notification suggestion module requires the user to ignore more than a threshold number of notifications from a cluster before suggesting the option to opt-out of the notifications from the associated source. In other embodiments, the

notification suggestion module asks or informs the user that notifications form a cluster are not going to be presented before stopping the notification. Other criteria used to determine the interest of a user to a notification cluster include notification not being used for more than a threshold amount of time (i.e., the user has not clicked the notification) and aggregate click through rate (CRT) being below a threshold (i.e., the percentage of users using the notification or clicking the notifications is below a threshold).

After the notification suggestion module **180** receives an action, event, or interaction it decides based on the previously mentioned rules whether to generate a new notification and push the notification to the user. If a new notification is generated and pushed to the user, the notification suggestion module monitors the user's behavior associated with the newly generated notification and modifies the rules if needed. In some embodiments, if the notification suggestion module **180** determines that a notification is not needed, the notification suggestion module waits a pre-determined amount of time (e.g., 1 hour or 1 day) before taking further actions regarding that notification. After the waiting time expires, the notification suggestion module **180** bundles all the unsent notifications that did not require immediate notification and generates a single notification that includes all the notifications in the bundle. In other embodiments, if the notification suggestion module **180** determines that a notification is not needed for a certain action, the notification suggestion module **180** simply does not generate nor push any notification regarding the performed action.

FIG. 3 shows the process of selecting notifications to be sent to a user of a social networking system. The notification suggestion module **180** first receives **310** information describing user actions associated with a source entity for a user, for example, notifications describing posts of users on a web page presented in the social networking system. The notification suggestion module **180** sends **320** notifications based on the user actions to the user. The notification suggestion module **180** observes the user's interactions with the notifications sent to the user, for example, whether the user interacts with the notifications. The notification suggestion module **180** determines **330** whether to suggest an option to opt-out from notifications from the user based on the observations. For example, if the user does not interact with the notifications for more than a threshold amount of time, the notification suggestion module **180** may suggest **350** the opt-out option to the user. If the user decides to opt out of notifications associated with the source entity, the notification suggestion module **180** reduces the rate at which notifications associated with the entity are sent to the user. For example, the notification suggestion module **180** may temporarily stop sending notifications associated with the source entity to the user. The notification suggestion module **180** may wait for a significant time interval before starting to send notifications associated with the entity to the user, for example, if the source entity has had a chance to make modifications that may improve the notifications and increase the chances of the user being interested in the notifications. The notification suggestion module **180** receives **360** feedback regarding the reasons as to why the user decided to opt out from the notifications. The notification suggestion module **180** may also receive **340** feedback from other users to determine, for example, aggregate information describing why users have opted out of notifications from the source entity. In an embodiment, if the user does not respond to the opt-out option, for example, by ignoring the opt-out option, the notification suggestion module **180** may automatically adjust the rate at which the notifications

are sent to the user. For example, if the user has not clicked on the notifications for more than a threshold time interval or continues to ignore more than a threshold number of notifications associated with the source entity and still hasn't opted out of the notifications associated with the source entity, the notification suggestion module **180** may reduce the rate at which the notifications are sent to the user. For example, the notification suggestion module **180** may aggregate the notifications and send multiple notifications as a combined notification message.

The notification suggestion module **180** may provide information describing why the user decided to opt-out of notifications associated with the source entity to a user associated with the source entity. For example, if the user opts out of posts associated with a web page, the notification suggestion module **180** may provide reasons as to why users have opted out of the notifications to a system administrator of the web page. As another example, if the user opts out of posts associated with a social group, the notification suggestion module **180** may provide reasons as to why users have opted out of the notifications to a user administering the social group. The feedback allows the users associated with the source of the notifications to improve the posts so that users may be more interested in the notifications.

FIG. 4 shows a user interface for presenting notifications to a user of the social networking system, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. Message **410** is the core of the notification and shows information describing the action that triggered the notification. The message **410** may contain information regarding the user that performed the action as well as a short description of the action. The user interface that shows an x-out **420** allows the user to hide the notification and opt-out from similar notifications. The timestamp **430** informs the user of the time the action was performed. In one embodiment, the notifications are sorted by timestamp, where the newest notification is displayed first and the oldest notification is displayed last.

FIG. 5 shows a user interface that allows a user to opt out of certain types of notifications, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. If the user clicks on the x-out button **420**, an opt-out message **550** is displayed. The opt-out message allows the user to turn off **560** all the notifications from the notification cluster or keep the notifications on **570**. In one embodiment, if the user clicks on the turn off button **560**, a confirmation message is displayed informing the user that the user is not going to get any notification from that cluster in the future. The confirmation message allows the user to revert the opt-out in case the user clicked the turn off button **560** by accident.

#### 50 Suggesting Notifications of a Social Group

The social networking system may allow users of the social networking system to form a social group. Users may become members of the social group and may interact with the social group. For example, a member may post a message in the social group that may be accessible to all members of the social group but may not be accessible to users outside the social group, depending on the privacy settings of the social group.

In some embodiments, notifications from members of a social group are provided to other members of the social group. A social group may also be referred to as a group herein. The notification suggestion module **180** provides notifications to a member of the group based on actions performed in the group by other members of the group. For example when a member of the group posts a new message in the group, or uploads a new image into the group, other members may receive a notification informing them of the

performed action. The default notification scheme is only suitable for small groups, but as the number of members in a group increases, the number of interactions inside the group also increases. This may result in an increase in the number of notifications a user gets regarding this group. After the number of members in a group has reached a certain limit, the default notification scheme may be changed to prevent a user from receiving too many notifications. In one embodiment, the notification suggestion module **180** changes its notification scheme after a group has reached a threshold number of members (for example, after a group has more than 250 members).

For groups with a large number of members, different criteria may be used to filter the notifications sent to a subject user. For example, in one embodiment, the notification suggestion module **180** may generate notifications only for actions performed by the user's connections and may ignore actions performed by other members that do not have a connection with the user. In another embodiment, the notification suggestion module **180** may generate notification for actions performed by members of that group that do not have a connection with the user and monitor the user's behavior after seeing the notification. If, for example, the user does not read a notification for more than a threshold amount of time (e.g., 30 days), then the notification suggestion module **180** may determine that the user is not interested in notification related to the user that triggered the notification and may automatically stop generating such notifications.

If a user is member of a group in which more than a threshold number of members have a connection with the user, the notification suggestion module may further filter out the notifications that are associated with members of the group that have a connection with the user. For instance, the notification suggestion module may filter out notifications associated with the user's connections based on an affinity between the user and the other members. The affinity between two users may be determined base on a rate of interactions between the two users. In one embodiment the user will only receive notifications from the top N friends, wherein "N" is a predetermined threshold number (such as N=100) and the friends are ranked based on their affinity with the user.

Notifications may also be filtered by seniority of a member in a group. For example, if a user is one of the first N members of a group (where N is a threshold number, such as 250), then the user will get notifications from all members of the group. If the user is not one of the first N members of the group, then the user will only get notifications from other users connected to the user.

Also, the notification suggestion module **180** may decide whether to generate a notification based on an affinity for the group of the user who performed the action that triggered the notification. The affinity for eth group may be determined based on an aggregate measure of the users interactions related to the group, including the frequency at which the user posts on the group, retrieves information related to the group, interacts with other members of the group, and so on. In one embodiment, if the user that triggered the generation of the notification has an affinity for the group that is higher than a threshold, every member of the group will receive a notification.

Notifications may also be filtered by the affinity for the group of the user receiving the notification. For example, a user with a high affinity for the group may receive notifications based on posts from all members, while a user with

low affinity for the group may receive notifications based on posts from the user's connections in the social networking system.

The notification suggestion module **180** may determine whether to send a notification to a user based on the average frequency of user interactions inside the group. For example, a group where members do not post many messages may send notifications based on all posts by members to every other member. Also small groups (e.g., where the number of members is below the threshold) that have a large number of actions that trigger notifications may filter notifications based on various criteria discussed herein.

FIG. 6 shows the process of selecting notifications to be sent to a user that is a member of a group. The notification suggestion module **180** first receives **610** a notification for a user. The notification suggestion module **180** determines **630** whether the user is among the first N members of the group. If the user is among the first N members of the group, then the notification suggestion module **180** automatically sends **620** the notification to the user. If the user is not among the first N members of the group, then the notification suggestion module **180** determines **640** if the notification was triggered by an action performed by a connection of the user. If the notification comes from a connection of the user, then the notification suggestion module **180** sends **620** the notification to the user. Otherwise, the notification is regarded as unimportant and is not sent to the user.

#### Alternative Applications

The features and advantages described in the specification are not all inclusive and, in particular, many additional features and advantages will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art in view of the drawings, specification, and claims. Moreover, it should be noted that the language used in the specification has been principally selected for readability and instructional purposes, and may not have been selected to delineate or circumscribe the inventive subject matter.

The foregoing description of the embodiments of the invention has been presented for the purpose of illustration; it is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed. Persons skilled in the relevant art can appreciate that many modifications and variations are possible in light of the above disclosure.

Some portions of this description describe the embodiments of the invention in terms of algorithms and symbolic representations of operations on information. These algorithmic descriptions and representations are commonly used by those skilled in the data processing arts to convey the substance of their work effectively to others skilled in the art. These operations, while described functionally, computationally, or logically, are understood to be implemented by computer programs or equivalent electrical circuits, microcode, or the like. Furthermore, it has also proven convenient at times, to refer to these arrangements of operations as modules, without loss of generality. The described operations and their associated modules may be embodied in software, firmware, hardware, or any combinations thereof.

Any of the steps, operations, or processes described herein may be performed or implemented with one or more hardware or software modules, alone or in combination with other devices. In one embodiment, a software module is implemented with a computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium containing computer program code, which can be executed by a computer processor for performing any or all of the steps, operations, or processes described.

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Embodiments of the invention may also relate to an apparatus for performing the operations herein. This apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, and/or it may comprise a general-purpose computing device selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program 5 stored in the computer. Such a computer program may be stored in a tangible computer readable storage medium or any type of media suitable for storing electronic instructions, and coupled to a computer system bus. Furthermore, any computing systems referred to in the specification may include a single processor or may be architectures employ- 10 ing multiple processor designs for increased computing capability.

Finally, the language used in the specification has been principally selected for readability and instructional purposes, and it may not have been selected to delineate or circumscribe the inventive subject matter. It is therefore intended that the scope of the invention be limited not by this detailed description, but rather by any claims that issue on an application based hereon. Accordingly, the disclosure of the embodiments of the invention is intended to be illustrative, but not limiting, of the scope of the invention, which is set forth in the following claims. 15

What is claimed is: 25

1. A computer implemented method comprising:
  - maintaining, by a social networking system, a group having a plurality of members, each member being one of a plurality of users of the social networking system, the group being a subset of the plurality of users of the social networking system; 30
  - receiving one or more posts from one or more members of the group, the posts directed to the group;
  - identifying a subject user from the plurality of members of the group for sending a notification to the subject user about one or more of the received posts; 35
  - determining whether to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user based on at least a seniority of the subject user in the group, the seniority of the subject user is measured as a rank of the subject user based on a number of members who joined the group before the subject user, the determination comprising: 40
  - responsive to the rank of the subject user exceeding a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user based on whether of the member sending the one or more posts is connected to the subject user in the social networking system; and 45
  - responsive to determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user: generating the notification about one or more of the received posts, and 50
  - sending the generated notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user. 55
2. The computer implemented method of claim 1, wherein determining whether to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user further comprises: 60
- responsive to the rank of the subject user being below a threshold value, sending the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.
3. The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising: 65
- responsive to size of the group being below a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.

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4. The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising:

- responsive to size of the group exceeding a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user if the member sending the one or more posts is connected to the subject user in the social networking system.

5. The computer implemented method of claim 1, wherein determining whether to send a notification to a subject user is based on a click through rate of the one or more posts based on past interactions of the members of the group.

6. A computer implemented method comprising:

- maintaining, by a social networking system, a group having a plurality of members, each member being one of a plurality of users of the social networking system, the group being a subset of the plurality of users of the social networking system;

- receiving one or more posts from one or more members of the group, the posts directed to the group;

- identifying a subject user from the plurality of members of the group for sending a notification to the subject user about one or more of the received posts;

- determining whether to send the notification to the subject user based on a seniority of the subject user in the group measured as a rank of the subject user based on a number of members who joined the group before the subject user, comprising: 25

- responsive to the rank of the subject user exceeding a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user based on whether of the member sending the one or more posts is connected to the subject user in the social networking system; and

- sending the notification about the one or more posts to the subject user conditionally based on the determining.

7. The computer implemented method of claim 6, wherein determining whether to send the notification to the subject user further comprises:

- responsive to the rank of the subject user being below a threshold value, sending the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.

8. The computer implemented method of claim 6, wherein the information about a relationship between the subject user and one or more other members of the group comprises an aggregate measure of frequency of interactions among members of the group.

9. The computer implemented method of claim 8, further comprising:

- responsive to the aggregate measure of frequency of interactions exceeding a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.

10. The computer implemented method of claim 6, wherein determining whether to send the notification to the subject user is further based on a size of the group.

11. The computer implemented method of claim 10, further comprising:

- responsive to group size being below a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.

12. The computer implemented method of claim 10, further comprising:

- responsive to group size exceeding a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user based on whether the member sending the one or more posts is connected to the user in the social networking system.

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13. The computer implemented method of claim 6, wherein determining whether to send the notification to the subject user is further based on a click through rate of the one or more posts based on past interactions of members of the group.

14. The computer implemented method of claim 6, wherein determining whether to send the notification to the subject user is further based on a rate at which the members post content to the group.

15. The computer implemented method of claim 1, wherein the members of the group are connected to a page associated with the group, and wherein the notification sent about one or more of the received posts is a notification about a message posted on the page by an administrator of the page or by another member of the group.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
responsive to determining not to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user:

waiting a pre-determined amount of time,  
after the pre-determined amount of time, generating the notification about the one or more received posts,  
and

sending the generated notification about the one or more received posts to the subject user.

17. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
responsive to determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user:  
receiving feedback regarding an interaction between the sent notification and the subject user, and  
modifying a rule for determining whether to send notifications to the subject user based on the received feedback.

18. A non-transitory computer readable storage medium storing instruction, the instructions when executed by a processor, cause the processor to:

maintain, by a social networking system, a group having a plurality of members, each member being one of a

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plurality of users of the social networking system, the group being a subset of the plurality of users of the social networking system;

receive one or more posts from one or more members of the group, the posts directed to the group;

identify a subject user from the plurality of members of the group for sending a notification to the subject user about one or more of the received posts;

determine whether to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user based on at least a seniority of the subject user in the group, the seniority of the subject user is measured as a rank of the subject user based on a number of members who joined the group before the subject user, the determination comprising:

responsive to the rank of the subject user exceeding a threshold value, determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user based on whether of the member sending the one or more posts is connected to the subject user in the social networking system; and

responsive to determining to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user:  
generate the notification about one or more of the received posts, and

send the generated notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.

19. The non-transitory computer readable storage medium of claim 18, wherein determining whether to send the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user further comprises:

responsive to the rank of the subject user being below a threshold value, sending the notification about one or more of the received posts to the subject user.

20. The non-transitory computer readable storage medium of claim 18, wherein determining whether to send a notification to a subject user is based on a click through rate of the one or more posts based on past interactions of the members of the group.

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